

A HISTORY
of the
MARION
METHODIST CHURCH

One Hundred and Seventy Years
1786-1956

and

A PAGEANT

From Asbury Onward

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MARION METHODIST CHURCH

REVEREND T. M. GODBOLD, *Pastor*

REVEREND A. F. RAGAN, *District Superintendent*



Begin in 1912 and dedicated in 1919, this handsome structure is the fifth church to be built by Marion Methodists. Surrounded by landscaped grounds, it presents a beautiful picture of outstanding architecture amid harmonious surroundings.

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Marion, South Carolina
June, 1956

FOREWORD

Borderland #365

IT MAY be well to note briefly the conditions that prevailed when both the United States and Methodism were in their infancy, as this backward glance will give a proper background for the history of Methodism in the town of Marion.

At the end of the Revolutionary War, America and the South were ripe for the ministrations of Methodism. At the War's beginning in South Carolina the churches (Episcopal because Church of England) had been closed and the clergy, mostly from England with sympathy for that country, had fled. During the War these church buildings were used for storehouses, for stables, and some were burned. After the War was won, the churches were re-opened but were far apart so that few people could attend religious services; one man asserted that during that period it was twelve years between the times he saw a minister. Into this time of acute spiritual need came itinerant Methodist ministers. How valiantly and untiringly those early circuit riders labored is told by A. M. Chreitzberg in his book, *Early Methodism in the Carolinas*:

"Ill names they heeded not, mountain barriers towered in vain, and flowing rivers stopped not their travel. . . . They slept by campfires, with saddles for pillows and the heavens for covering, explored forests, traversed sandhills, dined on the most homely fare at the foot of forest pines, and preached Jesus and the resurrection everywhere."

Marion, along with the entire Atlantic seaboard, is deeply indebted to these circuit riders for the Methodism we have inherited from them.

Committee:

MISS MABEL MONTGOMERY, *Chairman*,

MRS. C. A. MONROE,

MRS. L. P. BYARS,

MRS. C. D. JOYNER,

MR. AND MRS. C. A. WILLCOX,

MISS GERTRUDE DAVIS.

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Chapter I

CHURCH BUILDINGS

1
1786-1912

METHODISM in the town of Marion has now reached the ripe age of 170 years. The present handsome and commodious structure, the fifth church building in which the Methodists of Marion have worshipped, is indeed a far cry from the first small log church. Called Flowers Meeting House, it stood about a mile north of Marion on land adjoining the home of General William Evans, the property now owned by a great-grandson, William Evans Gasque, a member of the present Methodist church. Named for a local family of Flowers who were early attracted to Methodism, Flowers Meeting House no doubt followed the pattern of other primitive structures of that period, of which a historian says: "Those early structures were generally built of logs and covered with boards rived out of bolts of timber from the forest and held in place by weight poles. The seats were made of logs split in halves with peg legs. The earth constituted the floor of these buildings." It must have taken the intense religious devotion for which early Methodists were noted to endure long hours sitting on backless benches, with feet resting on cold, bare dirt. What a contrast to our comfortable furnace-heated and often air-cooled church auditoriums of today!

But the early Methodists of Marion may not have waited for Flowers Meeting House to be built in order to gather together. It is probable that a brush arbor antedated the Meeting House, for early Methodists used brush arbors extensively as places of worship in the years before they recovered sufficiently from the turmoil of the Revolutionary War to build churches. And class meetings, held in homes, no doubt antedated a brush arbor.

Local tradition says that in 1786 Hope Hull preached the first Methodist sermon heard here. This would seem to be true. In that year of 1786 Jeremiah Mastin and Hope Hull, two young itinerant ministers with only one year's experience in the traveling connection, were sent to the Pee Dee circuit, which included Liberty

Precinct, as the settlement of Marion was then called for Liberty, later Marion, County. Pee Dee circuit was no small, closely settled section to be covered easily. In 1786 Pee Dee circuit was made to embrace the territory on both sides of the Great Pee Dee river, to extend from Georgetown, South Carolina, to within ten miles of Salisbury, North Carolina, and had a membership of 285 whites and ten colored. In spite of its vast size, and the fact that travel was by horseback, Jeremiah Mastin and Hope Hull labored so zealously that a mighty revival of religion swept the Pee Dee valley; one writer aptly calls Mastin and Hull the Apostles of Pee Dee Methodism. "Broadax" was an honorary nickname by which Hope Hull came to be known not only in the Pee Dee area but elsewhere because the power of his preaching was said to be like mighty blows from a broad axe. He was a natural orator but his special gift was in prayer. The labors of Mastin and Hull resulted in that one year (1786) in the ingathering of 600 members and the erection of 22 meeting houses. So out of the unremitting work of Mastin and Hull could have come the formation of a society (the early name for congregation) of Methodists in Marion, or one might have existed before. Whether Flowers Meeting House was the direct result of Hope Hull's personal labors cannot be definitely known, nor the exact date of the building. W. W. Sellers, in his *History of Marion County*, fixes the date as somewhere between 1783 and 1790. Others think it was built in 1784 or 1785, which is prior to the ministry of Hope Hull.

Certainly Flowers Meeting House was in existence when Bishop Francis Asbury paid his first visit to Marion in February, 1789. He mentions it by name in his Journal. At the time of his visit to Marion (then Liberty Precinct) Bishop Asbury was in the prime of life and at the maturity of his physical and mental strength. Not tall—he lacked four inches of being six feet—a contemporary has described his appearance as that of one born to command. Added to his administrative labors of presiding at conferences, he is said to have preached 18 to 20 times a week for 45 years, making a sum total of around 50,000 sermons during his life in America. He was filled with a passion for bringing salvation to sinners; a holy fire kept him going day and night, in sickness and health, fording streams and getting wet, sleeping on the ground when no habitation was near.

When Bishop Asbury first came to Liberty Precinct, he spent Saturday night with Henry Flowers, apparently a leader in the

local Methodist society. Next day Flowers Meeting House proved too small to hold the crowd that had gathered from far and near to hear the pioneer Methodist bishop who was called the Wesley of America. Tradition says Bishop Asbury preached in the open air under a huge oak tree in the yard of General Evans; and the tree, until it died of old age, came to be called the Methodist Oak. It is said that on this occasion General Evans had chairs brought from his house to accommodate the ladies. In his Journal, under date of February 8, Bishop Asbury says of this day: "Notwithstanding the rain, we had many to hear us at Flowers. It was in due season that I was led out here on Peter's denial of his Master; for there had been a great falling away because of drunkenness; this was not told me until after the preaching." His statement that "there had been a great falling away" is further evidence of the earlier organization of a society, which gave time for some members to "fall away", or backslide, prior to the Bishop's first visit. And the rain he mentions would not seem to indicate a very comfortable outdoor gathering on that February Sunday; however, the rain did not appear to dampen the interest of the audience for the hardy people of those days were accustomed to much physical discomfort, which they accepted as a matter of course.

A year later, February, 1790, Bishop Asbury was again in Marion. His Journal's comment was brief. "At Flowers there was a lively stir; one soul found peace and I had freedom in preaching." James Jenkins, a youngster born and raised in Britton's Neck, lower Marion County, where his maternal grandfather was one of the first settlers, came to hear the Bishop. Jenkins had joined the Methodist Church in Britton's Neck August 10, 1789, yet had never felt conversion; after joining the church, he had associated with preachers and helped with class meetings but had continued to struggle spiritually. In his fascinating Autobiography written in his old age and titled by him, *Experiences, Labors and Suffering of Reverend James Jenkins* (1764-1847), he first quotes Bishop Asbury's statement from his Journal concerning this day at Flowers Meeting House, "one soul found peace," then continues, "Glory, glory, glory to God, I was that soul!" According to Mr. Jenkins that was a sacramental Sunday and he participated, of which experience he says, "My soul was filled with joy unspeakable." Offering himself as a candidate for the ministry at the next annual conference, James Jenkins was accepted and continued as a leading member of the South Carolina Conference for fifty years. In

his *History of Methodism in the Pee Dee*, Rev. R. E. Stackhouse pays this high tribute to him, "Few men who belonged to our Conference ever organized more societies, built more new churches or was instrumental in the salvation of more souls than James Jenkins." Hence the young man who was soundly converted at Flowers Meeting House long ago led a life of great usefulness to Christ, to the Methodist Church and to his fellow men. Some of his collateral descendants are members of the present Methodist Church at Marion.

Our local church history contains early gaps that cannot be filled. Why Flowers Meeting House was discontinued, or moved, and its name changed, is not known. Some time before 1800 it became Bethel Church, the second church building of Marion Methodists, and had a new location east of Marion on what is now known as Sandy Bluff road, on the road's right side between the last house and Smith's Swamp. Among Bethel's members were names familiar in Marion County history: Jesse Wood, Henry Gasque, Nathan Evans, Bennett Flowers, Moses Wise and Francis Wayne. Reverend James Legette, a local minister, supplied Bethel as pastor.

The next unknown gap is why Bethel ceased to exist before 1814. In that year the Reverend Joseph Travis came to Marion to take charge of the Academy. He stated that there was no Methodist church in the village but that on Wednesday nights he preached in the courthouse. Reverend Travis, a licensed minister, having decided to locate on account of his wife's poor health, chose Marion because he thought it was a healthy place and also because here he could combine teaching with preaching. In his Autobiography, written in his old age, he tells most interestingly of his coming and of his life in Marion. "My wife was threatened with a deep-seated consumption" (he was then stationed at Georgetown) "and I thought to locate in some healthy place and by persuasion consented to take charge of the Marion Academy, in Marion district, S. C., at which place I remained for three years and again took the itinerant field."

He continues further: "At Marion Courthouse I had a flourishing school and endeavored to render myself useful to the rising generation by praying morning and evening with my students and preaching to them every Wednesday night in the Court House (at that time there being no church in the village) and frequently lecturing them on the subject of religion. I had my regular appointments in the country and frequently two or three days' meetings and I

had reason to believe that my efforts were not in vain with the dear people in that section of the country. I also had two excellent coadjutors living near the village, namely, Rev. Jesse Legett and Rev. Jesse Wood. I hope never to forget their work of patience and labor of love with me. Brothers Legett and Wood were good preachers and great lovers of plain, primitive Methodism. . . . In 1815 I resumed charge of the Academy—my school flourishing and becoming quite large in so much that I was necessitated to employ assistance. I also continued my nightly preaching in the village and on Saturdays and Sundays in different parts of the district in which I lived, and frequently going to Darlington, a neighboring district. . . . I had a comfortable year throughout—good health, good school, good meetings and, in addition to all this, the health of Mrs. Travis began to improve."

In the early part of 1816 Bishop Asbury paid his third and last visit to Marion. Of this, Rev. Travis says: "It was indeed but a short time before his death. . . . He remained with me several days and nights and each day showed plainly that he was not long for this world. . . . Previously to his departure from my humble dwelling, he earnestly requested me to give up the school and again enter the itinerary. I promised him to do so and accordingly the next year I was readmitted to the conference. I very reluctantly parted with Bishop Asbury, fully calculating never again to see his face on earth. He died a few weeks after he left my house." True to his promise to Bishop Asbury, and also because of his wife's improved health, in 1816 Rev. Jenkins left Marion, re-entered the ministry and was next stationed at Fayetteville, N. C.

A few years later a brick academy was erected and its upper story used as a house of worship by all denominations. There is little information available covering the years 1816-1833 concerning Methodism in Marion. In 1829 Rev. Tristam Stackhouse, in his plan of the Pee Dee circuit, made mention of a congregation at Marion. Therefore it seems probable that during these years the Methodists shared the academy with other denominations as a place for holding services.

The *Quarterly Conference Journal* of the Pee Dee circuit shows that in 1833 Thomas Evans, Francis Wayne and Benjamin Holt were appointed a committee to estimate the amount necessary to build a Meeting House in Marion village; and Thomas Evans, John A. Cherry, James G. Bethune, F. A. Wayne, General Evans,



Completed in 1853 and dedicated by Bishop Paine, this beautiful old building of the southern type of architecture was the fourth church edifice of Marion Methodists.

In 1912 it was torn down to make way for the present handsome structure.

Benjamin Holt, and Moses Coleman were appointed trustees of this church.

The church built by them, Marion Methodists' third, stood on Godbold Street, corner of Pine, where the residence of Mrs. C. L. Pace now stands. Erected and completed at a cost of \$1,200.00, here the Methodists of Marion continued to worship until some 20 years later when Marion's growth made a new church necessary.

But the new church was not built at the Godbold and Pine Streets location. At that time the brick academy stood where the Methodist church stands today. The Marion cemetery lay behind it and was Marion's only burying ground for all denominations. The story is told, with excellent foundation, that a change was considered; in fact, seemed necessary, children of that generation being decidedly like those of today. At recess the Academy pupils were in the habit of using the cemetery as a playground. In their games they broke so many gravestones that it was deemed inadvisable to continue to hold school so near the cemetery. The cemetery could not be moved, but the Academy could. Accordingly, in order to protect the cemetery, the trustees of the church and the trustees of the Academy met together and agreed to exchange lots. And this was done. Therefore the location of the present Methodist church as well as the one immediately preceding it, is due to the exuberance of school children of more than a century ago. The cemetery was also there long before the church, as two Revolutionary soldiers are said to be buried in it.

The new building, the fourth church edifice of Marion Methodists, was completed in 1853 and dedicated by Bishop Paine. The cost is not known. In his valuable historical address delivered at the laying of the cornerstone of the present church in 1912, Rev. W. C. Power says of this fourth church: "I have the impression that several members each contributed \$1,000.00 to the enterprise, namely: Samuel Stevenson, Col. W. W. Durant, Major Gibson, General William Evans and perhaps others. "These amounts would seem to set an example in generous giving.

It was a beautiful church of excellent proportions and of the old type of southern architecture, with a portico in front, stately white columns and a steeple reaching heavenward. The interior had upstairs galleries for the use of slaves. From its nearly new portals many Confederate soldiers were carried to their graves in the old cemetery behind the church during the war years 1861-65. The sweet toned bell in the steeple, the gift of Major Gibson,

could be heard several miles in the country; through the years since its first installation it has rung for joyous events and tolled for the passing of the dead. It still rings today.

Besides the building of a new church, 1853 was important in another way. In November of that year, at the S. C. Conference meeting in Newberry, the local church was taken from the Marion circuit and made a station. Reverend James Stacey was the first preacher in charge and he served the years 1854-56. This Conference action would seem to indicate that Marion Methodists were growing in number and in finances, in order now to be able to build a new church and to assume the salary of a full-time minister.

From Rev. W. C. Power's address we quote the following list of persons who were members of Marion station in 1854: "Col. W. W. Durant, Major Gibson, Gen. Elly Godbold, Samuel Stevenson, Wesley Gregg, Gen. William Evans, Asa Godbold, Nathan Evans, Francis Wayne, John Mc Millan, James Graham, Major J. R. N. Tenhet, William Foxworth, John Willcox, Johnson Young, Chesley D. Evans, Gen. Wheeler, Andrew J. Evans, William Crawford, Thomas Evans, George Edwards, Henry Gasque, Thomas Fore, W. J. Dickson, Horatio Mc Clenaghan, Dr. Dickson Evans, Reddin Smith, Bennett Flowers, Dr. John A. Cherry, James G. Bethune, Benjamin Holt, Moses Coleman, Mrs. Nancy Godbold, Mrs. Rachel Cherry, Mrs. Martha Gibson, Mrs. Sarah Scarboro, Mrs. Sara Ann Evans, Mrs. Desda Coleman, Mrs. Jane Evans, Mrs. Rhoda Godbold, Mrs. Ann Graham, Mrs. W. W. Durant, Mrs. Asa Godbold, Mrs. Lizzie Richardson, Mrs. John Mc Millan, Mrs. Francis Wayne and others, both male and female, whose names I cannot now recall."

Though not germane to Methodism, it may be of interest to note here the opinion of a Yankee reporter concerning the town of Marion in the year 1865. Sent out by *The Nation* to observe at first hand the condition of the South immediately following the end of the War Between the States, the correspondent wrote of Marion, and it was published in *The Nation*. "It is a very quiet, pretty little village full of trees and gardens and light elegant houses, made of brick and iron, seem strangely out of place."

1912-1956

The old church built in 1853, though dignified in architecture and full of hallowed memories to the older members, lacked facilities for modern Sunday School work. Furthermore, the congregation had outgrown its size. After the turn of the century, Marion Methodists began to talk and to plan for a new and larger church, to be their fifth church building. The church of 1853 was torn down to make way for the new one on the same spot. During the building period, the Methodists worshiped in the Town Hall.

After the architect's plan had been approved and the cost estimated, it became apparent that the ambitions of the Methodists outweighed their finances. But a high goal had been set for a beautiful church building and there was no giving up. Members got to work in earnest that the handsome church of their dreams, and of the architect's plan, might materialize into brick and stone. Times were not as opulent then as now. Everybody sacrificed until it hurt. Of course the men, due to their greater earning power, gave the larger contributions; however the women, with limited earning ability, did their full share. They organized into four wards, with a chairman over each; and there was keen though good-natured rivalry among the wards as to which could lead in amounts raised. They were untiring in their efforts to make money. Woolen comforts were quilted and sold, dinners served; and one old lady, Mrs. Anna Tenhet, nearing ninety, knitted shawls and sold them for her ward, her zeal as untiring as if she expected to worship in the new church for another long lifetime. The self-denial and indomitable spirit of these women is shown in that of Mrs. M. E. Harrell (mother of Mrs. R. B. Jones and Miss Carrie Harrell),* chairman of her ward and an untiring leader. Said she, at a meeting of her ward, "Ladies, I have worn this hat for seven years and I cannot buy a new one until the church is built and paid for!" For the sake of these women, it is a pity that no separate record was kept of their contributions which went into the general treasury. But it is known that they paid for the church steps, for the organ and for the plants which made the church grounds into outstanding beauty.

The Marion Star of September 2, 1912, says of the laying of the cornerstone of the new church: "On Monday afternoon the cornerstone of the new Methodist church was laid in the presence of a large audience—of members of that church, of other churches



Another view of present church building

and citizens in general. The invocation was by the pastor, Rev. S. B. Harper; benediction by Rev. Henry Salmond, rector of the Episcopal Church, after the sun had set behind the trees. At the end of Rev. Harper's invocation, the congregation joined in the Lord's prayer. Rev. H. B. Jones, presiding elder, read selections of Scripture appropriate to the occasion. Then Rev. Harper introduced Rev. W. C. Power, D.D., a retired minister, who read a very interesting sketch of the history of the Marion Methodist Church.

The cornerstone was put in place by Mr. R. B. Jones, chairman of the Building Committee. Mr. Will Stackhouse, Messrs. W. M. Henderson, P. B. Hamer, F. F. Covington and W. H. Cross officially placed in the cornerstone the following articles: Copy of the Holy Bible, Discipline of the Methodist Church, Hymn Book, list of ministers of Conference, 1911, documents containing names of pastor, presiding elder, boards and church committees, pastors of other churches, members of city government, entire membership of church, list of names of contributors to birthday offering of Sunday School, copy of Southern Christian Advocate of August 30, 1912, copy of *The State* newspaper, September 2, 1912, copy of *The News and Courier*, September 2, 1912, and copy of the *Marion Star*, August 28, 1912.

According to an ancient custom, some coins were also placed inside the cornerstone: a dollar, a half dollar, a quarter, a dime, a nickel and a penny.

Inscription on the face of the stone reads:

First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Organized
1786, erected 1912. S. B. Harper, Pastor

Inscription on side reads:

R. B. Jones, Chairman of Building Committee
W. M. Henderson, Builder
Wheeler and Stern, Architects

The ceremonies were concluded with the singing of the doxology by the congregation and the pronouncing of the benediction by Rev. Henry Salmond."

The Sunday School portion of the new church building was completed first and services held there while more money was raised and the church proper finished.

From the *Marion Star*, April 20, 1919:

"First Methodist Church was dedicated by Bishop U. V. W. Darlington on Easter Sunday, April 20, 1919. Presentation of the Church was made by Mr. F. F. Covington (Value, \$75,000.00). Besides an eloquent and forceful sermon by Bishop Darlington, a special musical program was rendered and for the first time a great gathering of people heard the new \$5,000.00 pipe organ which had recently been installed.

The dedication meant that there was no debt on the church, one of the most beautiful in the Pee Dee section. All the members of the community as well as the Methodist members took great pride in the accomplishment of the Methodists in their huge task.

Bishop Darlington greatly pleased those fortunate enough to attend these services. He had a splendid voice and spoke as one naturally expects a bishop to speak."

The dedication ended seven and one-half years of unremitting labor by the entire congregation, during which time the members had worked as one person toward the culmination of their heart's desire for a new church.

Later the church was fortunate in securing the services of Mr. Harlan P. Kelsey, nationally known civic planner, who made a plan for landscaping the church grounds. A committee undertook the arduous work and the women raised the money. For two years the committee toiled, grading the ground, making a lawn and setting the plants. In order to make the money go farther, small plants were used. Because designed by Mr. Kelsey the grounds today present the appearance of a finished painting by a master who dealt in greens and colors that form a perfect setting for the church. Passersby stop to admire the grounds, which have been written up in a national magazine.

Chapter II

MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED THE MARION METHODIST CHURCH SINCE 1786

THE following extract is taken verbatim from the historical address by Rev. W. C. Power at the laying of the cornerstone of the present church. Elsewhere in his address Mr. Power stated that he had had personal knowledge of the Marion Methodist Church since 1868. This important fact adds interest and value to his delightful comments on each minister (such comment in most instances based on personal friendship) who has served the local church since 1853, when it was removed from the Marion circuit and made into a station, until 1912, the date of the laying of the cornerstone and of Mr. Power's address. The list of names from 1786 to 1853, the latter date being when Mr. Power's reminiscences begin, also those from 1912 to the present time in 1956, are from the minutes of the S. C. Conference. Here is Mr. Power's extract:

"It may not be void of interest to give the names of the preachers who have served the Methodist people of this community from 1786 to 1853, and from that period to the present date.

As heretofore indicated, in 1786 this entire region of country was embraced in the Pee Dee Circuit and Jeremiah Mastin and Hope Hull were the preachers on that Circuit for that year. From that date on the following named preachers served the Circuit: R. Bingham, L. Andrews, R. Ledbetter, Thomas Humphries, Mark Moore, Aquila Sugg, Hardy Herbert, W. A. Lilly, John Bonner, William Mc Dowell, James Tollerson, Arthur Lipsey, Enoch George, Josiah Randall, John Russell, James Jenkins, J. Humphries, James Douthet, John Simmons, Hanover Donnan, Josiah Cole, Zachariah Maddox, Jeremiah Russell, Thomas Shaw, William West, Thomas Nelson, Loric Pierce, John Porter, Stephen Thompson, John Gamewell, Thomas Heathcock, Robert Porter, Thomas Heame, Charles Fisher, Lewis Pickens, William S. Talley, Nathan Kimball, Anthony Sentor, Asheley Hewitt, Nicholas Talley, Thomas Stanley, Griffin Christopher, Anderson Ray, Lemuel Moore, James Russell, Amos Curtis, John W. Kennon, Wiley Warwick, Anthony Sentor, Thomas D. Glenn, William Capers, John Postell, J. Hayes, A.

Hewitt, G. Christopher, Daniel Mc Phail, Davis S. McBryde, Daniel Monaghan, Samuel Johnson, A. R. Sanders, John Gamewell, James Persons, A. Leatherwood, William Hawkins, John W. Norton, Josiah Evans, Nicholas M. Mc Intyre, Christian G. Hill, Nicholas Ware, John Dix, J. Boswell, J. H. Treadwell, J. W. Norton, M. Turrentine, M. Mc Pherson, E. Sinclair, J. Hitchenor, Benjamin Gaines, John L. Jerry, Joseph Moore, William Smith, M. P. Groover, William M. Wightman, W. Culverhouse, H. Robertson, William Murrah, J. G. Humbert, N. Larney, B. H. Capers, John Mc Call, W. W. King, Jackey E. Bradley, J. Allen, Tracey R. Walsh, Mark Russell, J. W. Townsend, P. G. Bowman, Thomas D. Turpin, W. M. Moore, W. J. Jackson, R. J. Limehouse, S. D. Laney, John R. Pickett, Lewis Scarboro, R. J. Boyd, J. R. Minnick, A. M. Chreitzberg.

In 1842 Marion Circuit was formed out of this Pee Dee Circuit territory. The following preachers served the said Circuit: W. A. Mc Swain, G. R. Talley, A. M. Foster, A. W. Walker, W. G. Patterson, O. Murchison, William R. Fleming, William Crook, I. O. A. Connor, J. T. Munds, A. Mc Corquodale, O. A. Chreitzberg, M. A. Mc Kibben, W. A. Clark, D. Mc Donald.

At the Conference held at Newberry November, 1853, Marion was set off as a station and James Stacey, a strong preacher, was sent on the work for the years 1854-55.

Since the station was formed, in addition to its first pastor, the following named preachers have served the work, viz.: Bond English, the faithful expounder of the Word of God, Claudio H. Pritchard, the eminently Scriptural preacher and faithful pastor, Daniel J. Simmons, the Methodist sermonizer, A. G. Stacey, of scholarly attainments, Thomas Mitchell, the critical student, M. A. Mc Kibbear, the fluent logician, R. J. Boyd, the wise teacher, Sidi H. Browne, the man of common sense views and original style, George H. Wells, the laborious pastor, John A. Porter, whose sermons, as delivered, would have graced any of the reviews, R. R. Pegues, the consecrated, earnest preacher and devoted shepherd; W. C. Power, Andrew J. Stokes, the cultured gentleman and successful worker; R. L. Harper, the finished rhetorician and charming preacher; A. R. Lester, the poet of the Conference; John T. Wightman, in whom were combined the tireless pastor and the eloquent orator; W. S. Wightman, a man of ability but incongruous elements of character; W. A. Rogers, whom everybody loved—as near faultless as human beings become in this world; J. S. Beasley, a prac-

tical preacher whose aspirations were to be understood by the humblest of his hearers; W. S. Martin, everybody's friend, always jovial and ready to do good; T. E. Morris, one of the few preachers who never tired his congregations; James E. Grier, popular in the pulpit and out of it, always and everywhere; R. E. Stackhouse, a man of varied attainments, analytical mind, and an interesting preacher; Jesse A. Clifton—dear “old Jess,” the recognized genius of the Conference, a peerless preacher and a preacher who always gave his hearers something to carry with them into the affairs of everyday life; J. H. Graves, a young man with elements in his makeup of decided promise; M. L. Carlisle, a preacher somewhat on the metaphysical order in thought whose sermons evinced earnest research and elaborate preparation; J. W. Kilgo, a man of level head and kind heart, an earnest worker and a safe and sound preacher; Sidi Browne Harper, the present incumbent who came to this charge under flattering auspices, has made full proof of his ministry and is growing in favor with the people of his charge.”

Ministers of Later Period

1910-1913, Rev. Sidi B. Harper; 1914-15, Rev. R. B. Turnipseed; 1916-19, Rev. J. Walter Daniel; 1920-21, Rev. Walter I. Herbert; 1922-25, Rev. D. Melvin Mc Leod; 1938-41, Rev. W. Roy Phillips; 1942-46, Rev. B. L. Knight; 1947-50, Rev. Julius E. Clark; 1951-53, Rev. J. H. Danner; 1954, Rev. T. M. Godbold, the present pastor.

Ministers From Marion Church

Few ministers have joined the Conference from the Marion Church. In years gone there were Dr. John O. Wilson and Rev. Leroy Beatty; more recently Rev. Charles Lovin, Rev. Peter Stokes, Junior, and Rev. George Lea Harper.

It is quite a notable event when a church, and especially a small church, entertains the annual conference. During its long existence, Marion has been host to the annual conference five times. They are:

November 28, 1855, Bishop John Early.

December 23, 1866, Bishop William M. Wightman.

December 15, 1880, Dr. Albert M. Shipp (the Bishop could not be present).

November 29, 1922, Bishop Collins Denny.

November 10, 1937, Bishop Paul Kern.

It will be noted that the first conference, 1855, came only two years after the Marion Church had been removed from the circuit

and made into a station; that so small a congregation should undertake to care for an annual conference was proof of Marion's well-known hospitality. The second, 1866, is additional proof of Marion's hospitality for at that time she was passing through a period of hardship and recovery from the War between the States.

Chapter III

SOLDIERS IN WARS

THE Methodists of Marion are proud to have had men in all the wars this country has fought during its existence. While no actual proof exists concerning participation in the War of the American Revolution yet it is highly credible that members of Flowers Meeting House (built either during or just after the close of the Revolution) had taken part in it, in all probability fighting under General Francis Marion whose vast battle-ground extended throughout this area and on toward the coast.

W. W. Sellers, in his *History of Marion County*, lists the rosters, by name and company, of all men from Marion County who were in the War between the States, among whom were members of the Marion Methodist Church. Some of these young Confederates lie in the old Marion Cemetery behind the Methodist Church, others were buried on battlefields.

The Spanish-American War included Marion Methodists.

The following lists contain the names of all members of the Marion Methodist Church who were in the Armed Services during World Wars I and II; we cherish all of them and particularly those who gave their lives for the preservation of freedom.

World War I

Appleby, Albertine Blackwell	Dickson, Robert W.
Baker, George Emory	Dill, Frank Leitch
Berry, Thomas Moody	Evans, Jacob Wells
Blackwell, Robert J.	Foxworth, Laverne L.
Brown, James Oscar	Gasque, Eddie Everett
Brown, Jesse Clifton	Gasque, Lanneau H.
Carter, Churchill Boyce	Gasque, Thomas J.
Cartright, Allen C.	Godbolt, Will Ellerbe
Crawford, Marion H.	Gregg, James Wesley
Cross, William Dixon	Hamer, Edward Buck
Davis, George M.	Hamer, Philip M.
Davis, James F.	Hewitt, William Lee
Davis, James Preston	Holden, Ellie V.
Dibble, Enoch M.	Hook, Edward W.

Howell, Carroll S.
 Layton, William Monroe
 Lewis, John O.
 Manheim, Carlisle M.
 Manheim, Michael
 Mathis, Otto
 Mc Clellan, Furman
 Meggs, William Leroy
 Monroe, Clarence Alva
 Monroe, David Eugene
 Monroe, James B.
 Monroe, John Theodore
 Montgomery, Harry D.
 Montgomery, John Kenly
 Montgomery, Thomas Carlisle
 Mullins, Benjamin R.
 Owens, Clarence A.
 Pace, Jimmie P.

Porter, James Crawford
 Porter, John Elbert
 Porter, Katherine Follin
 Porter, Luther Victor
 Porter, Robert Marvin
 Rose, A. Mc Koy
 Rowell, Elly M.
 Skipper, Harry
 Snipes, Wilson W.
 Snipes, Wyatt Eure
 Tenhet, Joseph Nesbitt
 Wheeler, John Aubrey
 White, Wilbur Simpson
 Willcox, Clark A.
 Tanner, Gary
 Tanner, Liston
 Tanner, Tom

World War II

Anderson, Charles, Jr.
 Bell, Edward
 Bostick, Charles
 Bostick, Frank
 Bostick, Joe
 Bostick, P. I.
 Bryant, Frank
 Bryant, Frederick
 Bryant, Malcolm
 Byars, Pat
 Cantey, Sam
 Cotton, Russell
 Davis, George, Jr.
 Deal, Roe
 Derrick, Warren, Senior
 Dowling, Edward S.
 Dozier, Cleveland
 Dozier, James Hoyt
 Evans, T. B., Jr.
 Godbold, Francis
 Hamer, Edward Buck, Jr.
 Harper, George Lea

Harper, Matt, Jr.
 Hitchcock, Linwood A.
 Jenkins, Park
 Jones, Harrell, Jr.
 Lewis, John O., Jr.
 Madonna, Sam
 Mathis, Sidney
 Merchant, Mancel
 Moody, Herman
 Monroe, Howard, Jr.
 Monroe, Theo
 Richardson, C. M., Jr.
 Roberts, Benjamin F.
 Roberts, Roy
 Shelley, Laurie
 Smith, P. B.
 Stackhouse, Walter
 Stanley, Thomas, Jr.
 Stephenson, R. A.
 Stevenson, Clement
 Stevenson, Ernest
 Stewart, Harry

Summerford, T. E.
Tanner, Marion
Thompson, William
Tilghman, Horace L.
Watson, Joe D.
West, Frank

Willcox, E. T.
White, Carlisle
White, Willie Joe
White, Zack
Woods, William

Chapter IV

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

THE growth of a Sunday School usually parallels that of a church, as the Sunday School trains its pupils, both children and young people, for future responsibility as church members and leaders. So the Sunday School of Marion Methodist Church has always been an important factor in the church life.

The first Methodist Sunday School held in Marion seems to have been organized by Major J. R. N. Tenhet in 1849. In his historical address, Rev. W. C. Power says that this early Sunday School conducted by Major Tenhet was held at Turkey Branch Academy on the premises of General William Evans, north of town. However, no printed sources verify that location. Mention in books concerning academies in Marion around that period indicate that these early academies were located in the village of Marion and not outside it. The important thing is not the exact location but the fact that a Methodist Sunday School came into being in 1849 and has continued without intermission through the more than a century since.

Little is known of the earliest Sunday Schools. The one in the old church, torn down in 1912 to make way for the present building, is remembered with affection by people today who attended it. They state enthusiastically that a very successful Sunday School was held prior to 1912. The old church had only one auditorium. In spite of this drawback, and without the benefit of separate classrooms, teachers taught classes of varying age groups scattered over the auditorium. Curtains gave some measure of privacy to other classes held in the galleries. The most distinctive feature of this successful Sunday School was that it was held on Sunday afternoons. The other denominations had morning Sunday School. This left the Methodist one as the only religious gathering for Sunday afternoon, hence it was well attended by young people of all denominations. Thus the Methodist Sunday School met the social as well as the religious needs of the young people of the town and gave them valuable training in leadership.

The names of the Sunday School superintendents as given by Rev. W. C. Power up to 1912 are: J. R. N. Tenhet, W. J. Mont-

gomery, Addison Lynch, F. F. Covington, A. B. Cox, L. H. Little. Since 1912 they are: T. C. Easterling, C. A. Monroe, and Horace L. Tilghman, the present superintendent. The records of past church conferences show that over a period of years W. M. Monroe and W. J. Montgomery alternated in the superintendency. C. A. Monroe is a son of W. M. Monroe and Horace L. Tilghman a grandson of W. J. Montgomery.

The membership of the present Sunday School totals 600, with eight departments; the Cradle Roll reaching the youngest baby and the Home Department ministering to the shut-ins. For those who come to Sunday School there are: Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary, Junior, Intermediate, Senior and Adult Departments, all working together under the leadership of Horace L. Tilghman, the present superintendent.

One of the oldest organizations of the church is what was formerly the Woman's Missionary Society, now the Women's Society of Christian Service. Its present membership is 200 in six circles under the direction of Mrs. Joseph K. Martin, president. In the past the women were originally divided into two circles: the Charlotte Taylor Missionary Society for foreign missions; and the Parsonage Aid, which embraced home missions as well as cared for the parsonage and the poor of the congregation. These two were merged into the present active organization.

Another activity by the women has been the church grounds. Since the completion of the present edifice the women have been unceasingly active in the planting and care of the beautiful church grounds which cover the front of an entire block on Godbold Street. In the beginning the women were instrumental in securing the services of an outstanding civic planner; they paid for the plants and a committee worked for two years grading the ground and setting the plants. Landscaped according to the plan of Mr. Harlan P. Kelsey, the grounds have been written up in a national magazine and are the pride of the town as well as of the church membership.

The Methodist Youth Fellowship, as its name implies, provides for the devotional and social life of the young people. Bill Derrick is president.

Music is an important part of church worship. The Methodist congregation is very fortunate to have had Mrs. E. B. Hamer serve as organist for approximately a quarter of a century.

Rev. T. M. Godbold is now serving his third year as pastor. Under his leadership the church has been blessed.

Rev. A. F. Ragan is in his third year as district superintendent.

Today 1,029 members work and worship in the beautiful church building which is a monument to the faith and courage of those who sacrificed in order to build it. An additional building is in process of being added to the church edifice.

According to the fourth quarterly conference of 1955, the value of the church and furnishings is \$250,000.00; that of the parsonage and furnishings, \$29,000.00.

May the present members emulate the sturdy qualities of those people of the past who made the Methodist Church of Marion stand firm in its faith and usefulness from Asbury Onward until now.

Pageant

FROM ASBURY ONWARD

(In the preparation of FROM ASBURY ONWARD, grateful acknowledgment is given to Mrs. Louise H. Entzminger of Hartsville, for ideas gleaned from THE ADVANCING CHURCH, a pageant written by her in celebration of 100 years by the Hartsville Baptist Church.)

Written by MABEL MONTGOMERY

Directed by MRS. C. M. RICHARDSON, JR.

Presented in the MARION METHODIST CHURCH, SUNDAY
EVENING, DECEMBER 4, 1956

CHARACTERS: Many members of Marion Methodist Church

Curtains part slightly, revealing Bible on pulpit. Spotlight from right (or left) back focused on Bible. Hold throughout song.

Voice (backstage):

“Now, therefore, we are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone”. (Ephesians, 19-20.)

(Choir sings two stanzas of “The Church’s One Foundation.”

Organ continues, fading out as narrator begins. Curtains close.)

First narrator:

This is the story of a church, the Methodist Church of Marion. It is the story of an advancing, growing church. Small, obscure, imperfect it began yet fashioned in the love of God and a desire to serve Him. It is also the story of faith and self-denial, the faith of men and women who built for themselves, for their children, for successive generations, and even for today. Self-denial that enabled them to do without luxuries as we know them in order to build succeeding church buildings so that the one in which we worship today is the fifth church building in which the Methodist congregation of Marion has worshipped through its existence of 170 years. The men and women who built for themselves and for the future faced hardships and discouragements all through the years but they persevered, believing in God’s power to lead them on and on triumphantly from victory to victory.

(Choir gradually increases, playing one or two lines, then gradually decreases as narrator continues)

Second narrator:

There were giants in those days, spiritual giants, men of vision who somehow saw beyond the needs of the present and into the future. Simple folks they were who built the first Methodist meeting house 170 years ago. Yet so worthily they wrought that the lives of men today reflect the warmth of the fires that were kindled. And eternity alone will reveal the full effects of all they did here to spread the cause of Christ and to place Methodism in Marion on a firm foundation.

First narrator:

The present town of Marion, then known as Liberty Precinct, was scarcely more than a settlement 170 years ago. The Revolutionary War had just ended. Most able-bodied men had fought in that war, probably under General Francis Marion. Ten years of war's strife and turmoil had upset conditions. Men had been absent from home. Therefore much needed to be done. Men felt that they must get busy at working and earning for their families again.

(Music as curtains close)

SCENE I

TIME: Soon after the close of the Revolutionary War.

PLACE: Liberty Precinct, as Marion was then called.

CHARACTERS: Several men dressed as men of that day might have dressed.

FURNITURE: Backless benches or home-made chairs.

First man:

"Let us have a meeting house. We are no longer soldiers. We have fought for, and secured our freedom from England. Now we have time for other things besides constant fighting. Long enough we have held class meetings in our homes and later in our brush arbor. It is time we had a meeting house in which we are to worship God. That is, if we expect to grow in numbers and convert souls."

Second man:

"Times are hard. We need to work for ourselves and our families. Couldn't we wait to build a meeting house until times are better and we have recovered from the lean war years?"

Third man (or first man again):

"If it is the Lord's will that we have a building, He will help us. But we must make a start ourselves."



PAGEANT, SCENE I

Time: Soon after the close of the Revolutionary War

The building of Flowers Meeting House, the first Methodist church in Marion, is being planned by present-day church members who impersonate local leaders in early Methodism.

Fourth man:

“I agree with that. The Lord helps those who help themselves.”

Another man:

“We can do it through self-denial.”

First man:

“Yes, we can. Let us build a plain meeting house. Doesn’t our great leader, John Wesley, preach that Methodists should observe simplicity in all things? A plain meeting house will fulfill that belief. By all means let us have a plain meeting house.”

Second man:

“Well said, brother. If we build, I will give timber for the meeting house. I will cut it from the forest back of my house.”

Fifth man:

“I am handy with tools. I will plane the lumber.”

Sixth man (or one who has already spoken):

“I will give two days’ work.”

Other man:

“And I.” “And I.” “And I.”

First speaker:

“Let us name the meeting house for our brother, Henry Flowers, and his family who have been so active in our Methodist society here.”

All in chorus:

“Aye! Aye!”

First speaker:

“Let us pray for the success of our church-to-be.”

(They kneel or remain standing and bow heads)

First speaker prays:

“Our Father, God, humbly we approach Thy throne. We believe that Thou hearest the unvoiced supplications of every heart here. Bless, we pray, what we have done here today in Thy name in order to extend Thy kingdom in this new and free land of America. We know we are weak, we know we are subject to blunders and mistakes. But, Father, Thou who hast made this world can take our feeble efforts and make them become a mighty force in Thy kingdom. Bless the meeting house we are about to build. Make it a bulwark for Thy service around about us . . . (Pause) . . .

The future is in Thy hands, O Lord. Guide us and those who shall come after us in all the years ahead. Use us for Thy glory. Amen."

First narrator:

Differences of opinion were ironed out. Together the members began the task they had set for themselves. It was not always easy. But finally the work was finished.

Second narrator:

Thus was born Flowers Meeting House, erected approximately 1785-86 and located about one mile north of Marion, on the east side of the road, adjoining the land of General William Evans, this land now owned by William Evans Gasque, a member of our Marion Methodist Church today. Flowers Meeting House in all likelihood followed the pattern of most of the structures of that early period. Therefore it must have been built of logs and covered with boards rived out of the forests. The seats were made of logs split in halves, with peg legs. The earth constituted the floor.

First narrator:

Local tradition says that in 1786 Hope Hull preached the first Methodist sermon heard here. In that same year, 1786, Jeremiah Mastin and Hope Hull, two young itinerant Methodist ministers with only one year's experience in the traveling connection, were sent by the conference to the Pee Dee circuit, which included Liberty Precinct, as Marion was called. In 1786 Pee Dee circuit was made to embrace the territory on both sides of the (Big) Pee Dee river, to extend from Georgetown, South Carolina to within 10 miles of Salisbury, North Carolina, and had a membership of 285 whites and 10 colored. In spite of its vast size, and the fact that all travel was by horseback, these two young ministers, Jeremiah Mastin and Hope Hull, labored so zealously that a mighty revival of religion swept the Pee Dee valley; one writer aptly calls Mastin and Hull the Apostles of Pee Dee Methodism. Whether the building of Flowers Meeting House was the result of Hope Hull's personal labors, or whether it was already built and he preached in it, is not known, nor is the exact date of its building. However, it would seem that this meeting house was a direct product of Hope Hull's earnest and powerful preaching.

Second narrator:

Certainly Flowers Meeting House was in existence when Bishop Francis Asbury paid his first visit to Marion in February, 1789. He mentions it by name in his Journal. At the time of his first visit

to Marion (then Liberty Precinct) Bishop Asbury was in the prime of life and at the height of his physical and mental strength. Not tall—he lacked four inches of being six feet—a contemporary has described his appearance as that of one born to command. When he presided at conferences he often sat with his eyes apparently closed but through the half-open slits he was carefully scrutinizing the men who sat before him. He is said to have preached 18 to 20 times a week for 45 years, making a total of around 50,000 sermons preached during his life in America. He was filled with a passion for bringing salvation to sinners; a holy fire kept him going day and night, in sickness and in health, fording streams and getting wet when no habitation was near.

First narrator:

When Bishop Asbury came to Marion the first time, he spent Saturday night in the home of Henry Flowers, evidently a leader in the local Methodist society. Next day Flowers Meeting House proved too small for the crowd that had gathered to hear the early American bishop. Tradition says that Bishop Asbury preached in the open air under a huge oak tree in the yard of General Evans, next door to Flowers Meeting House, and that the tree, until it died of old age, came to be called the Methodist oak. As the time was February, generally a cold, rainy month in this locality, it is hoped that the winter weather became mild for that occasion, important in the history of Marion Methodism. But the Bishop, inured to inclement weather, makes no mention of it in his Journal.

SCENE II

TIME: February, 1789.

PLACE: Open air sermon under tree in General Evans' yard.

CHARACTERS: Bishop Asbury and some members of his congregation.

MUSIC: Any song likely to be sung by Methodists of that era.

Bishop Asbury:

“I shall read a portion of the Scriptures containing Peter’s denial of his Master and take that for my text.”

(Reads):

“Then they took him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest’s house. And Peter followed afar off.

And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down among them.

But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also with them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

And about the space of an hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, of a truth this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean.

And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Luke 22:54-62

(Soft music. Curtain closes)

Second narrator:

A year later Bishop Asbury was again at Flowers Meeting House. At his second visit James Jenkins, a young man born and reared in Britton's Neck, lower Marion County, was converted, later joined the South Carolina Conference, and was a most useful member of it for 50 years.

First narrator:

Our local church history contains many gaps that cannot be filled. Why Flowers Meeting House was discontinued, or moved, is not known. Some time before 1800 it became Bethel Church, the second church building of Marion Methodists. Bethel was located east of Marion on what is known as Sandy Bluff road, on the right side, near Smith's Swamp. Bethel's membership contained names familiar in Marion County's history, among them: Jesse Wood, Henry Gasque, Nathan Evans, Bennett Flowers, Moses Wise, and Francis Wayne. Reverend James Legette, a local minister, supplied Bethel as pastor.

Second narrator:

The next unknown gap is why Bethel ceased to exist before 1814. (In the period between the building of Flowers Meeting House and 1814, the name of Liberty Precinct had been dropped for Gilesboro, so called for Col. Hugh Giles, a Revolutionary hero, and then changed to Marion to accord with the name of the county). In that year Reverend Joseph Travis, a Methodist

minister who located in Marion because of his wife's poor health and who taught the Academy, stated that there was no Methodist church in the village but that on Wednesday nights he preached in the Courthouse. Later a brick academy was erected and its upper story used as a house of worship by all denominations. The Reverend Joseph Travis continued to hold services there during the three years he lived in Marion.

First narrator:

In 1833 the quarterly conference appointed Thomas Evans, Francis Wayne and Benjamin Holt a committee to estimate the amount necessary to build a meeting house in Marion village. Thomas Evans, John A. Cherry, Jesse G. Bethune, F. A. Wayne, General Evans, Benjamin Holt and Moses Coleman were appointed trustees of this church. The church built by them, the third occupied by Marion Methodists, stood on the northwest corner of Godbold and Pine streets, where the residence of Mrs. C. L. Pace now stands. It was erected and completed at a cost of \$1,200.00. Here Marion Methodists worshipped until some 20 years later when Marion's growth made a new church necessary. But the new church was not built at the corner of Godbold and Pine streets. At that time the brick Academy stood where the present Methodist church stands today. The Marion cemetery lay behind it.

SCENE III

TIME: About 1851 or 1852.

(Meeting of school trustees and trustees of Methodist Church.

Let each group be seated on a side. One man presides.)

Man who presides says:

"The meeting will come to order. This is a joint meeting of the trustees of the Marion Academy and the trustees of the Marion Methodist Church. Will some one state the purpose of the meeting?"

Second speaker (stands):

"I will. I am a trustee of the Academy. The Marion cemetery lies just back of the Academy. The families who have loved ones buried in the cemetery complain to the principal of the Academy that grave stones are constantly broken by the Academy pupils playing in the cemetery at recess. It is hard to keep the children out of the cemetery. Punishing them has only temporary effect. The principal

does not know what to do. Of course it is a pity that the cemetery and the Academy are located so close together."

First speaker:

"I also am a trustee of the Academy. The cemetery cannot be moved but the location of the Academy can. We have heard that you Methodists are planning to build a new church. We therefore ask you who represent the Methodist Church to consider exchanging lots with us. Such a change will place your church near the cemetery and will place the Academy, and its mischievous pupils, at a safe distance from the cemetery."

Third speaker:

"I am chairman of the committee representing the Methodist Church. We have talked it over and are agreeable to an exchange of lots, which is fair to all parties."

Man who presides:

"All those who favor an exchange of lots please stand."

(All stand)

Presiding officer:

"It is unanimous. Therefore the Methodists will hereafter own the property that belonged to the school and the school will own the former church site."

Second narrator:

So plans went forward for the building of a new church, the fourth church to be occupied by Marion Methodists. A group of interested church leaders met to talk over matters.

SCENE IV

TIME: About 1851-1852.

Chairman:

"Now that we have a new location for our new church, we must build a beautiful church and a good church that will take care of the future as well as our present needs. This will require considerable money. Who will contribute toward the new church?"

Col. W. W. Durant:

"I consider it a privilege to contribute toward a new church. I will give \$1,000.00"

Gen. William Evans:

"I will give \$1,000.00."

Samuel Stevenson:

“I will give \$1,000.00.”

Major Ferdinand Gibson:

“I will give \$1,000.00 and a bell for the steeple. I want a bell that can be heard by our members who live in the country.”

Chairman:

“This is a fine start. With such a generous beginning, do you think we can undertake another expense? Shall we ask the next annual conference, when it meets next fall, to take our church from the Marion circuit and make it into a station?”

Samuel Stevenson:

“That means, are we able to pay the entire salary of a preacher in order to have services every Sunday? The preacher will care for our spiritual needs during the week?”

Chairman:

“That is correct, Bother Stevenson.”

Col. Durant:

“I move that we ask the next annual conference, when it meets at Newberry, to remove this church from the Marion circuit and make it into the Marion station.”

Chairman:

“Everybody in favor of this important motion, please hold up your hands.”

(All hands are raised, Curtain closes. Soft music.)

First narrator:

A beautiful church was built. It had stately white columns, a portico in front and a steeple in which hung the bell, the gift of Major Gibson. Due to the elevation of the bell, its sweet tones could be heard several miles in the country as was desired by Major Gibson. Besides the downstairs occupied by pews, the interior had upstairs galleries for the use of Negro slaves.

Second narrator:

Marion was made into a station by the next annual conference. Reverend James Stacey served as the first pastor during the years 1854-55. This conference action would seem to indicate that Marion Methodists were growing in numbers and prospering in finances, in order to build a church and pay a full-time minister.

First narrator:

Through the valuable historical address of Reverend W. C. Power, the names of the members of the Marion Methodist Church in 1854 have been preserved. They were Col. W. W. Durant, Major Ferdinand Gibson, Gen. Elly Godbold, Samuel Stevenson, Wesley Gregg, Gen. William Evans, Asa Godbold, Nathan Evans, Robert Gregg, Francis Wayne, John Mc Millan, James Gregg, Major J. R. N. Tenhet, William Foxworth, John Willcox, Johnson Young, Chesley D. Evans, Gen. Wheeler, Andrew J. Evans, William Crawford, Thomas Evans, George Edwards, Henry Gasque, Reddin Smith, Thomas Fore, W. J. Dickson, Horatio Mc Clenaghan, Bennett Flowers, Dr. John A. Cherry, James C. Bethune, Benjamin Holt, Moses Coleman, Mrs. Nancy Godbold, Mrs. Rachel Cherry, Mrs. Martha Gibson, Mrs. Sarah Scarboro, Mrs. Sarah Ann Evans, Mrs. Desda Coleman, Mrs. Jane Evans, Mrs. Rhoda Godbold, Mrs. Ann Graham, Mrs. W. W. Durant, Mrs. Asa Godbold, Mrs. Lizzie Richardson, Mrs. John Mc Millan, Mrs. Francis Wayne; and others, both male and female, whose names Mr. Power said he could not recall.

SCENE V—A POUNDING

TIME: About 1800.

CHARACTERS: Couple who take the parts of minister and his wife, and many members of congregation.

Second narrator:

In past years it was a Methodist custom for a congregation to welcome a new minister and his wife by calling at the parsonage on the evening of their arrival. Each caller brought a gift of food, supposedly only a pound, in order that the new minister and his family would have enough food to supply them until they were settled. This custom gave the name "Pounding" to such a gathering, even though the gifts often weighed much more than a pound and might include cakes, salads, meats and canned goods for the days ahead. So a pounding was always arranged for the new minister and his wife on their first evening on a new charge. The next scene shows such a pounding by the Methodist congregation of Marion for the new minister and his wife about 1800.

(This scene is acted without dialogue but in lively pantomime. The couple who take the part of the minister and his wife stand facing the audience. Many members of the congregation file

through the chancel (parlor in a parsonage) and present the gifts they have brought. The gifts are accepted with enthusiasm by the minister and his wife. Entire families, including children, may be included in congregational groups. All participants dress in costumes appropriate to 1800 or earlier.)

(Curtain)

First narrator:

Years passed. Years of spiritual and numerical growth to the Marion Methodist Church. During this period it was served by many dedicated ministers who left their impress on the lives of the congregation. These ministers have been aptly described by Rev. W. C. Power as quoted in our church history.

Second narrator:

Came the turn of the century. Talk of a new church was heard. The old church, sound structurally, dignified architecturally, and full of hallowed memories to the older members, lacked facilities for modern Sunday School work. The old church had only one auditorium. In it teachers taught Sunday School classes of varying age groups. Curtains gave some privacy to other classes held in the galleries.

In spite of these drawbacks, a remarkably alive and enthusiastic Sunday School was conducted. Its most distinctive feature was that it was held on Sunday afternoons. The other churches had morning Sunday School. This left the Methodist as the only religious gathering for Sunday afternoon; hence it was well attended by young people of all denominations. Thus the Methodist Sunday School met the social as well as the religious needs of the young people of the town and gave them valuable training for leadership.

However, the children and young people who went to Sunday School were the church members of the future, therefore it was felt that more up-to-date provision should be made for them. The congregation began to realize that each Sunday School department should have separate space. Also the congregation was outgrowing the old church. Marion Methodists began to plan for their fifth church building.

SCENE VI—STEWARD'S MEETING

TIME: About 1911 or 1912.

REV. S. B. HARPER, *pastor.*

Chairman:

“Brethren, it is the will of the congregation that we build a new church. This is a momentous undertaking and entails grave responsibility on this Board of Stewards. Let us discuss the matter fully. I shall be glad to hear from each of you.”

One man:

“I favor a new church. Some of the new churches have kitchens in them. I do not want a kitchen in our new church. It seems irreverent to me to cook food in the house of the Lord.”

Second man:

“I also favor a new church. But I do not wish to give if there is a sliding partition between the church auditorium and the Sunday School department. Sliding partitions are ugly and offend one's sense of beauty.”

Third man:

“Mr. Chairman, I want a church. So I make no conditions to my gift. If the Lord spares me to work and earn, I shall give in proportion to my means and as the Lord has blessed me.”

Chairman:

“I am sure that these small differences of opinion can be smoothed out. You have shown a fine and progressive spirit. I announce the following building committee as chosen by the church conference:”

(He reads aloud.)

R. B. Jones, chairman; W. M. Monroe, W. J. Montgomery, W. S. Foxworth, T. C. Easterling, H. A. Lewis, Will Stackhouse, Walter F. Stackhouse.

Chairman:

“Brother Harper, will you lead us in a closing prayer?”

Rev. S. B. Harper prays:

“Our Father, we ask that Thy spirit dwell with us as we set about the new church for the glory of Thy name. Bless, we beseech, this undertaking so that the church we build may be a sanctuary where Thy children will draw very close to Thee. May

it be used for Thy service in the years that lie ahead. We ask it in Thy name. Amen."

(Curtain closes)

Second narrator:

The old church was torn down in order that a new one be built on the same spot. During the building period, the Methodists held Sunday services in the Town Hall.

SCENE VII—LAYING OF CORNERSTONE OF NEW CHURCH

PLACE: Grounds of Methodist Church.

TIME: September 2, 1912. Late afternoon.

CHARACTERS: Members of church, board of stewards, building committee, people of town.

(Main characters stand in front and crowd behind.)

Rev. S. B. Harper:

"Let us pray."

(Everybody joins in Lord's prayer.)

1312025

Rev. S. B. Jones, presiding elder, reads selections of Scripture.

Rev. S. B. Harper:

"I wish to introduce Reverend W. C. Power, a former Methodist minister now retired and living among us. Brother Power has had personal knowledge of Methodism in Marion since 1868 which makes what he will say to us very valuable indeed. Brother Power:"

Rev. W. C. Power (old man):

"Dear friends, my address is long and may tire you. A copy of it will be placed in the cornerstone and it will also be published in *The Marion Star*. Therefore I will not give it except to say that this congregation is embarking on a new church to the glory of God and I feel that He will bless your efforts."

Rev. S. B. Harper:

"The cornerstone will now be put in place by R. B. Jones, chairman of the building committee, Will Stackhouse, of the board of stewards, and W. M. Henderson, builder."

(The above bend over what is supposedly the stone.)

Rev. S. B. Harper:

"Brothers P. B. Hamer, F. F. Covington and W. H. Cross will place the following in the cornerstone:

(Mr. Harper names each article as placed.)



PAGEANT, SCENE VII

Time: September 2, 1912

Laying of the Cornerstone of the present church, Rev. S. B. Harper, Pastor

Copy of the Holy Bible.

Copy of Methodist Discipline.

Copy of hymn book.

List of ministers of Methodist Conference for 1912.

Names of pastor, presiding elder, church boards and committees of this church.

Names of members of Marion city government.

Names of pastors of other churches in Marion.

List of entire membership of Marion Methodist Church.

Contributions of birthday offering from Sunday School.

Copy of Southern Christian Advocate, August 30, 1912.

Copy of Columbia *State* and *News and Courier*, September 2, 1912.

Copy of *Marion Star*, August 30, 1912."

Rev. Harper continues to speak:

"According to an ancient custom, some coins are always placed inside the stone; a half dollar, quarter, dime, nickel, and penny."

(These are placed.)

Rev. Harper:

"I will now read the inscription on the face of the stone:

(He reads.)

First Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Organized 1786, erected 1912.

S. B. Harper, pastor."

Rev. Harper:

"The inscription on the other side reads:

R. B. Jones, Chairman of Building Committee.

W. H. Henderson, Builder.

Wheeler and Stern, Architects."

Rev. Harper:

"We will conclude the exercises with the singing of the doxology."

(Everybody joins in singing.)

Rev. Harper:

"I will now pronounce the benediction."

(Curtain)

First narrator:

After the architect's plan had been approved, the cost estimated and the cornerstone laid, it became apparent that the ambitions of the Methodists of Marion had outstripped their finances. But

a high goal had been set for a beautiful and useful church building and there was no thought of giving up. Members set to work in earnest that the handsome church of their dreams might materialize into reality. Times were not so opulent then as now. Everybody sacrificed until it hurt. Of course the men, due to their greater earning power, were the largest contributors.

Second narrator:

However the women, with limited earning ability, did their full share. They organized into four wards, with a chairman over each; there was keen though goodnatured rivalry among the wards as to which could lead in the amounts raised. They were untiring and resourceful in their various ways to raise money. Public dinners were cooked and served, woolen comforts quilted and sold. One old lady, Mrs. Anna Tenhet, nearing 90, knitted shawls and sold them for her ward, her zeal as enthusiastic as if she expected to worship another long lifetime in the new sanctuary. The self-denial and indomitable will of these women is evidenced in Mrs. M. E. Harrell, chairman of her ward. Mrs. Harrell was the mother of Mrs. R. B. Jones and Miss Carrie Harrell, members of our church today.

SCENE VIII

TIME: During the building of the new church.

PLACE: Home of some member of this ward.

CHARACTERS: Mrs. Harrell and members of her ward. Mrs. Harrell is large, portly and undiscouraged. Mrs. Tenhet is knitting.

Mrs. Harrell (with emphasis):

“Ladies, we *must build this church*. You and I must each do her part. We must *never* give up! We must do without. I’ll tell you one way *I* do without! I expect to wear this hat, and not buy a new one, until this church is built and paid for.”

(Curtain)

First narrator:

As a matter of record, Mrs. Harrell wore the hat for *seven* years, during the entire time the church was being built and paid for. She is a symbol of the determination that dominated the women. For the sake of these valiant women it is a pity that separate records were not kept of the specific things for which they paid but it is known that they paid for the church steps, for the



PAGEANT, SCENE VIII

Time: During the building of the present church, 1912-1919

As an example in giving and self-sacrifice, an indefatigable woman leader declares that she will wear her one hat steadily until the new church is built and paid for—which she did for seven years.

organ, and for the plants that, following the landscape plans of Mr. Harlan P. Kelsey, made the church grounds into outstanding beauty.

Second narrator:

There followed seven years of unremitting self-sacrifice and giving in order to pay for the handsome new church which slowly became a reality. The Sunday School side of the building was finished first. All church services were thereafter held in it while everybody struggled to raise sufficient money to finish the main auditorium. During the final months of building it was often necessary to go around to various members who had already given and urge them to give again in order to meet each Saturday's pay roll for the workmen.

SCENE IX

CHARACTER: Dr. T. C. Easterling.

First narrator:

We of this generation are fortunate in inheriting a very beautiful church edifice. Two members of the committee that built this church are still with us. They are Mr. Walter F. Stackhouse (who has since died) and Dr. T. C. Easterling. In order that we may more fully understand the financial struggle undergone by the committee in the completion of the church, Dr. Easterling has been asked to tell us about the raising of the final amount of money necessary for completion. Dr. Easterling is the beloved retired superintendent of the Marion schools. Dr. Easterling:

(Dr. Easterling tells movingly of the severe self-denial practiced by each member of the congregation in order to build the church. He lays special stress on the herculean labors performed by the building committee in raising the final \$10,000.00. Many people who had already given gave again.)

(Curtain)

Second narrator:

Determination and self-sacrifice finally triumphed. The beautiful church building stood debt-free. No church is dedicated until it is free of debt. It was dedicated by Bishop U. V. W. Darlington on Easter Sunday, April 20, 1919. The presentation of the church was made by Mr. F. F. Covington. Bishop Darlington preached an eloquent and forceful sermon. The great gathering of people also

heard for the first time the new \$5,000.00 pipe organ that had just been installed.

On this happy occasion it was interesting to contrast the commodious, well-heated edifice with Flowers Meeting House, the early church in which Methodists of Marion first worshipped.

SCENE X—PATRIOTIC SCENE

CHARACTERS: Five men who take the parts of soldiers in each of the five wars in which the U. S. has participated.

First narrator:

While Methodists believe in the separation of church and state, we also believe that good Christians are good citizens. During the four wars that have occurred during the life of this church—and in all likelihood during the Revolutionary War which ended just prior to the organization of Flowers Meeting House—members of this church have served their country bravely and loyally. Some have given their lives. In the 1860's men of this church followed the Bonnie Blue flag in the War between the States; in the Spanish-American War, when Remember the Maine was the battle cry, also served members of the Marion Methodist Church. In 1917 when World War I engulfed our nation, young men from this church answered their country's call. It seems almost yesterday when other young men were called into service in World War II.

(As each war is mentioned, a soldier in the uniform of that war comes to front of stage or platform. Fairly soft light. Music as follows):

Revolutionary War—America

War between the States—Bonnie Blue Flag

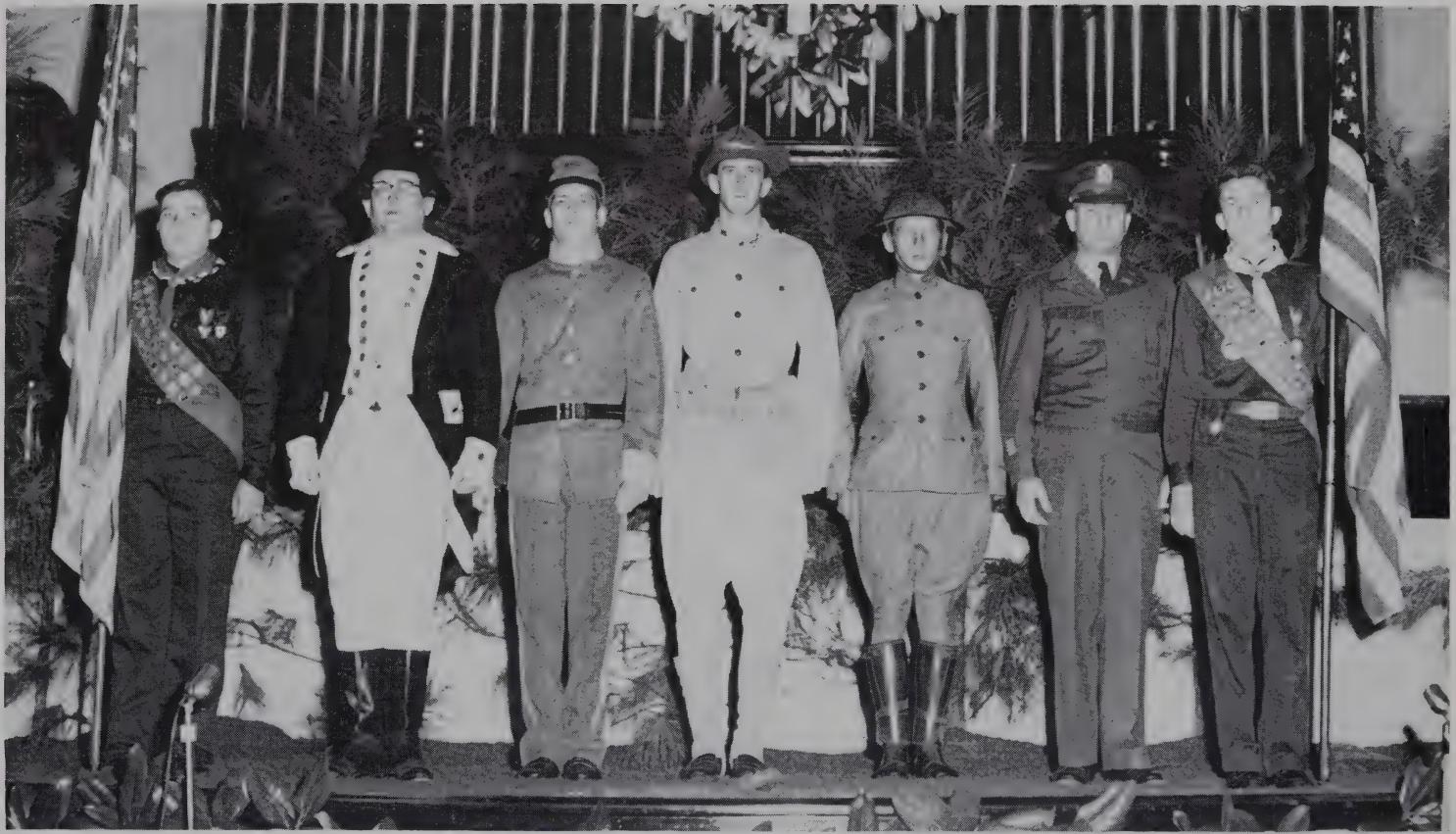
Spanish-American War—Battle Cry of Freedom

World War I—There's a Long, Long Trail

World War II—God Bless America

Second narrator:

This church feels deeply grateful to all the members who went out to fight for human rights and for our belief in democracy. We shall cherish forever all of those and shall hold in loving memory those who gave their lives for their principles.



PAGEANT, SCENE X

Five young men, each wearing the uniform of that war, represent the five wars in which members of the Marion Methodist Church have fought. Two Boy Scouts hold United States flags.

Now as cold war threatens the world, may we pause and each breathe a silent prayer for guidance that only God can give, for increased faith, and for strength to meet whatever may be ahead.

(Solo, backstage, The Lord's Prayer.)

(Curtain)

First narrator:

One hundred and seventy years have passed since that early handful of consecrated men and women organized themselves into Flowers Meeting House, the first Methodist church in Marion. One hundred and seventy years of devotion to God, of developing Christian character through opportunities for service. One hundred and seventy years of growing in strength and membership.

Nobly the Marion Methodist Church stands today, with many facets, each shining in its own particular brilliance, each filling its own definite purpose, and radiating the love of God from whom the light and strength come.

In this advance of one hundred and seventy years the Sunday School has played an important part, now with a total of 600 members and eight departments: the Cradle Roll reaching the youngest baby and the Home Department ministering to the shut-ins. For those who come to Sunday School there are: the Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary, the Junior, Intermediate, Senior and Adult, all working together under the leadership of the general superintendent, Horace L. Tilghman.

SCENE XI—MARION METHODIST CHURCH TODAY

CHARACTERS: Pastor, district superintendent, officials of the church, of Sunday School and women's organizations.

(As narrator begins above paragraph, representatives of each group enter at center, backstage, walk to the front, then take places forming final scene. Cradle roll will be a young woman carrying a baby or doll wrapped in blanket. Home department may be an elderly woman perhaps seated in wheel chair. Other departments are represented by their superintendents. After all are in place superintendent of Sunday School stands at back of line. Same procedure will be followed in other organizations.)



PAGEANT, SCENE XI

Time: December 4, 1956

Officers of all organizations of Marion Methodist Church today, including Church School—it ranging from Cradle Roll through Home Department—Woman's Society of Christian Service, M.Y.F., Reverend T. M. Godbold, Pastor-in-Charge and Mrs. Godbold.

Second narrator:

One of the oldest organizations of this church is what was formerly the Woman's Missionary Society, now the Women's Society of Christian Service. It now numbers 200 members and is under the direction of Mrs. Joseph K. Martin, president. In the past the women were originally divided into two circles: the Charlotte Taylor Missionary Society, for foreign missions; and the Parsonage Aid, which embraced home missions through caring for the parsonage and the poor of the congregation.

The M. Y. F. (Methodist Youth Fellowship), as its name implies, provides for the devotional and social life of the young people. It meets every Sunday evening.

Reverend T. M. Godbold is now beginning his third year as pastor. Under his leadership, the church has been blessed.

(Mr. Godbold takes his place in front center of group. If desired, boys may hold Christian flag on one side of stage and American flag on the other.)

Rev. A. F. Ragan is in his third year as district superintendent. Under his wise supervision, the affairs of the Marion district are in splendid condition.

(Mr. Ragan takes his place.)

First narrator:

Today this church advances. Today 1,029 members work and worship in this beautiful building which is a monument to the faith and courage of those who sacrificed in order to build it. It has been said that we are the sum of all the moments of our lives. So the present Marion Methodist Church is the sum of all the untiring efforts of those who have worked and prayed through 170 years. Programs have been launched, mistakes have been discovered, and changes have been made.

And still the work goes on. Only the Father knows what the future years may bring. We cannot stand still. We must grow and progress or else remain static, which is fatal to church spirit.

The present church edifice is a gift to us from the past. Two generations ago gave it to us. None of our efforts or money went into it. So the responsibility of the present church membership is to meet the pressing need for an educational building just as the men and women who built this church met theirs. Let us search ourselves in order to see our duty and then perform it.

Second narrator:

More important than tangible evidences of progress are those intangible qualities that cannot be measured but are realities—the truest marks of a church's advancement—the deepened spirituality of the church members, closer Christian fellowship, a renewed zeal for the work of the Master.

Confidently this church faces the future, faces another century with the staunch faith that has characterized it from the beginning. It is a challenging future, vibrant with opportunities for even greater advancement and greater victory for the glory of God.

Hymn: Lead On, O King Eternal.

Congregation stands and joins in singing.

Prayer and benediction by Rev. T. M. Godbold.

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